Programs and Services

Farm and Food Report, Week of February 13, 2006

Crop Opportunity And Scott Research Update In North Battleford | Custom Grazing A Real Opportunity For Landowners | New Lentil And Caraway Resources On Saf Website | Great Sand Hill Area Producer Makes Waves In The Flour Mill World

Week of February 13, 2006

CROP OPPORTUNITY AND SCOTT RESEARCH UPDATE IN NORTH BATTLEFORD

Saskatchewan producers and industry are invited to attend the Crop Opportunity and Scott Research Farm Update at the Western Development Museum in North Battleford on February 23.

"The mandate of the Western Applied Research Corporation (WARC) is the transfer of technology from researchers to Saskatchewan producers, and the evaluation of the economic implications of technology for Saskatchewan producers," says Sally Germsheid, WARC administrator, "which this meeting will bring forth."

Sherrilyn Phelps, a regional Soils and Crops Agrologist with Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food (SAF), who also oversees WARC, will open the meeting with introductions and a short history of WARC. The first speaker of the day will be John Buchan, SAF Bio-Products Co-ordinator, who will talk about biodiesel and ethanol, explains Germsheid.

"We will also have a session on energy use on the farm with Ken Rosaasen, who is an agricultural economist with the University of Saskatchewan. He will talk about energy efficiency for producers."

Following that will be a session on managing cropping decisions with high input costs with Stu Brandt, a researcher with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.

This will be followed with a session entitled "What is New in Weed Control" with Eric Johnson, a weed biologist with AAFC. Penny Pearse, the Provincial Plant Disease Specialist with SAF, will help guide participants through disease issues for 2006. There will then be a session on Opportunity for Pulses and Livestock Feed with Michelle Fleury of the Saskatchewan Pulse Growers Association.

"The day will conclude with a Grain Market Outlook for 2006 with Ron Styles, who is with Union Securities. He will provide a market outlook for grain and cattle," says Germsheid.

Over 100 participants attended this event last year. The event runs from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Registration is $20.00, with lunch included.

WARC benefits from funding from the SAF Agri-ARM (Agriculture Applied Research Management) program.

For more information, contact:

Sally Germsheid
Administrator
Western Applied Research Corporation
(306) 658-4321

Week of February 13, 2006

CUSTOM GRAZING A REAL OPPORTUNITY FOR LANDOWNERS

Custom grazing is a real opportunity for forage producers to earn some extra revenue, without actually owning cattle.

Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food (SAF) Forage Development Specialist Trevor Lennox sheds light on this increasingly common practice:

"Custom grazing arrangements for livestock make sense when producers have more pastureland than they have cows to graze it. As the amount of land being converted to perennial forages in the province continues to expand, we are likely to see an increase in custom grazing because many producers end up with more forage than they can use for their own livestock. This is where custom grazing can work—where one producer has the land, water and grazing expertise, and another person owns the cattle."

Custom grazing allows landowners to have a more stable income each year, whereas cattle ownership can have large income fluctuations from one year to another due to market situations.

It is worth keeping in mind that there are business people and individuals who will invest in cattle, and will pay someone else to look after them. For these people, custom grazing is financially attractive.

"Custom grazing activities are generally a business arrangement, governed by a contract that outlines what each party is responsible for," explains Lennox.

The grazing contract is important. It outlines an agreement between two parties to perform certain functions over a certain time period. Some grazing contracts work on a daily rate, while others operate on a rate/pound of gain.

For an inexperienced custom grazier, Trevor Lennox recommends a daily rate because it guarantees income levels, whereas the rate/pound of gain stipulation is for more experienced graziers who want to generate the most profit from their land.

"In essence, custom grazing minimizes the capital investment required to generate an economic return from land ownership by grazing cattle on contract," he says. "In many instances, land that is unsuitable for grain production is capable of producing quality forage that can be used to graze cattle and generate a return to the owner. Grazing can also be an important land improvement tool, by maintaining a permanent vegetative cover to recycle nutrients and improve overall soil quality over time."

Experts like Lennox believe that grazing is more sustainable than making hay.

"Nutrients are returned to the soil in the manure; organic matter is built up over time, and the entire soil ecosystem is regenerated, instead of nutrients being steadily depleted by haying."

But Lennox warns that contract grazing is not a casual business venture. It requires a thorough knowledge of both pasture and animal husbandry. Parties must agree on who is responsible for the veterinary treatment of sick animals, or the loss of animals. These are important considerations that must be agreed upon initially.

Bear in mind that if you own cattle and intend to enter into a custom grazing agreement with a landowner, it is well worth making sure your animals are healthy. This is why it is preferable that they come from a single source and not directly out of a sale barn.

More information on grazing contracts can be found on the website of the U.S.-based National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service:

http://www.attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/grazingcontracts.html

For more information, contact:

Trevor Lennox
Forage Development Specialist

Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food
(306) 778-8294

Table of Contents

Week of February 13, 2006

NEW LENTIL AND CARAWAY RESOURCES ON SAF WEBSITE

Turn to the Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food (SAF) website when looking for the latest information on Saskatchewan crops. SAF has recently enriched its lentil and caraway sections with valuable new information for growers.

Provincial Specialized Crops Specialist Ray McVicar outlines some of the new content:

"There has been diversification in the lentils industry in the last few years, as demonstrated by the increased interest in red lentils. Canada has recently become an important producer and exporter of red lentil, and our website information now reflects this."

Red lentils account for more than half the world trade in the crop, and they are sold in either whole seed or split form. Processing facilities capable of de-hulling and splitting red lentils for the world market have been built in Saskatchewan, according to the updated website information.

There have also been advancements in varieties and crop protection products for lentils, and McVicar says the information provides guidance on these developments as well.

"Another crop on which the website now focuses is caraway," McVicar explains. "Caraway is a spice crop. It is well adapted to the more moist areas of the province in the east—the black soil zones."

Caraway is used to flavour foods such as bread or sauerkraut. The seed contains 2.5 to 4.5 per cent essential oils. The oil is used to flavour meats, mouthwash and liqueurs. Carvone is the principal traded constituent of caraway oil (52 per cent), with limonene making up 45 per cent of the oil.

Caraway is cultivated everywhere from northern temperate to tropical climates, including northern Europe, Russia, Jamaica, India, Canada and the United States. Caraway production in Saskatchewan has ranged from 4,000 to 8,000 hectares (10,000 to 20,000 acres) from 1999 to 2005.

"Our website contains information about disease control on caraway," says McVicar. "There is a very serious disease that affects caraway, blossom blight, which was a particular problem in Saskatchewan last year."

McVicar believes producers should know about the breadth of information available in the crops section of the SAF website.

They can access the caraway section by looking under Crops/Special Crops/Production Information on the SAF website.

The lentils information can be accessed by looking under Crops/Pulses/Production Information on the SAF website.

For more information, contact:

Ray McVicar
Provincial Specialist, Specialized Crops
Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food
(306) 787-4665

Table of Contents

Week of February 13, 2006

GREAT SAND HILL AREA PRODUCER MAKES WAVES IN THE FLOUR MILL WORLD

On the western edge of Saskatchewan's Great Sand Hills, Arnold Schmidt is making waves in the flour mill world.

"I started farming in the mid-1940s and then, in 1980, I started farming organically," he explains. "I started selling wheat at first in bags. Then we went into flour. I was looking at stone mills. I decided they were too slow and started to develop my own mill, and eventually got into building mills for other people."

Schmidt Manufacturing and Schmidt Flour are located at Schmidt's farm, 30 miles north of Maple Creek, on the north side of Big Stick Lake, 3.5 miles off the #21 highway.

Through the years, Schmidt's mills have evolved in terms of efficiency and suitability for various needs.

"They can do almost anything. We can do white flour. The new mills will be able to de-bran and mill all at one time. With other mills, you have to do the de-branning first and use other equipment to do the milling," he says. "We sell the mills all over the world. We have them in the Philippines, China, Australia and all over the United States. We've sold quite a few right here in Canada, also. They are more efficient than most mills."

Some are used in bakeries; some are used for general flour milling to feed local populations.

"We are working on a deal in North Africa for 900-horse units. They will be big capacity—4,000 pounds per unit per hour. The whole mill system for that is worth millions of dollars. I just do the mill."

How did Arnold Schmidt become so proficient in mill design?

"I am mechanically minded. I have always been that way," he says. "Nutrition and mechanics have been my major interests. I don't have that high an education, but I do a lot of research."

Schmidt also taps into local talent.

"Some smaller mills are produced by guys who used to work for me—they started a shop right in Maple Creek building mills—but the final touch is done here. They weld them together for us and we work on them. We have an 80-foot-long, insulated quonset hut at the farm. Usually we have two or three people working full time here. We gear up more if we get a big order."

Over the years, Schmidt has made substantial investments in mill research and design. It now seems his investment in mills is paying off, to the point where he is now developing high-nutrient breakfast cereals made with rye, hemp and flax, due to be market-ready in the spring.

You may have guessed it: Schmidt is not planning to retire anytime soon.

For more information, contact:

Arnold Schmidt
Schmidt Manufacturing Ltd.
(306) 666-4800 http://www.schmidtflourinc.com/

© 2007 Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food.